

Poughkeepsie Journal
Editorial
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Plan to assess PCB damage needs input

Toxic chemicals have done much damage to the Hudson River -- and the creatures that live in or near its waters. But exactly how much damage has not yet been fully determined.

At a public meeting today in Poughkeepsie, plans for assessing the harm done by PCBs will be discussed. Area residents should make it a point to attend.

The Natural Resource Damage Assessment will be undertaken at about the same time as a \$500 million cleanup of the industrial solvents. General Electric Co., which originally dumped them before they were banned in 1977, is cooperating with the cleanup.

These polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, have been linked to cancer in laboratory animals, and EPA studies conclude they are probably a carcinogen in humans as well. But their effect on many wildlife species has not been studied. In fact, they may be a factor in the sparse populations of some animals, Erik Kiviat has said. He is science director at Hudsonia, a nonprofit research institute based at Bard College.

Certainly fish have been affected; a once-thriving river fishing industry has been nearly decimated. Bald eagles along the Hudson have been found to contain high concentrations of the chemical. But the actual effect on these creatures, and others like turtles and muskrats, is not clear.

Meetings will be held in the next few weeks in New York City, Albany and Washington County. Officials with the state Department of Environmental Conservation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will present the assessment plan and answer questions. Residents may come at any time during the two sessions.

This assessment is the first step toward rehabilitating wild creatures harmed by PCBs. Public input will help ensure that it's a good step.

WHAT'S NEXT **PCB HEARING**

A hearing on assessing PCB damage to Hudson River resources will be held today anytime between 2 and 4 p.m. and 7 and 9 p.m., at the City of Poughkeepsie Common Council chambers, on the third floor of city hall, Civic Center Plaza.